

From: ["Bryan, David" </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP \(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT\)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=DE67FD66319E475AA76B7FB0C64D64B5-BRYAN.DAVID>](mailto:Bryan.David@EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=DE67FD66319E475AA76B7FB0C64D64B5-BRYAN.DAVID)
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Missouri Coalition for the Environment urges more attention to Bridgeton landfills

March 16, 2013 12:15 am • [By JEFFREY TOMICH jtomich@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8320](#)

An environmental group called Friday for additional information about risks posed by two landfill sites in north St. Louis County — one containing radioactive waste and the other an underground fire putting off noxious fumes.

The [Missouri Coalition for the Environment](#) held a briefing at the Machinists Union Hall in Bridgeton with local elected officials.

The group is trying to ratchet up political and public pressure on regulators and [Republic Services](#), the Phoenix-based waste management company that has ties to both landfill sites.

The [Environmental Protection Agency](#) last month said radioactive material at the West Lake Landfill is 1,200 feet from the underground fire. The agency said it is working with the [Missouri Department of Natural Resources](#) to monitor events at the Bridgeton landfill, where Republic is attempting to control the underground smoldering and extreme temperatures.

But Peter Anderson, an economist and frequent critic of Republic Services, said the company and regulators play down the risks.

"Everything that they're saying is intended to mollify and keep people from being anxious," he said. "I think it's time that the anxiety level is raised, and not lowered."

Republic Services countered on Friday afternoon, criticizing Anderson and his Madison, Wis.-based nonprofit group, [Center for a Competitive Waste Industry](#).

"Anderson owes Bridgeton residents an apology for trying to scare them with one false statement after another," Tim Trost, area president for Republic, said in the statement.

Republic Services also asked EPA to quickly release findings from testing conducted with a special aircraft equipped with radiological monitoring equipment.

But Washington University professor [Bob Criss](#), a critic of a plan to cap the waste at West Lake and leave it in place, released a report concluding that the agency needs to do more to define the radioactive material.